



NEWS RELEASE

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**More than 1.7 million people to benefit from
New Year Social Welfare Increases**

Government targets resources at those who need them most - Hanafin

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin T.D. said today (30th December 2008) that the weekly social welfare rates of payment will increase from the first week in January and will benefit more than 1.7 million men, women and children.

Speaking today Minister Hanafin said, **“the Social Welfare rate increases that were announced as part of a €19.5 billion Social Welfare Budget for 2009 are targeted at those who are most in need of our support – pensioners, families dependent on social welfare payments and those seeking employment. At a time when public expenditure must be tightly controlled the €515 million package of social welfare improvements being provided for Social Welfare in 2009 is a clear signal of the Government’s commitment to protect the vulnerable and less well-off in society.”**

From this week, pensioners will see **an increase of €7.00 per week in the maximum personal rate for all state pensioners** – Contributory and Non-Contributory. This will bring the new maximum personal weekly rates to **€230.30 and €219** respectively. Increases for Qualified Adults range from €4.30 to €6.30 per week for those aged over 66 years of age.



Minister Hanafin said that the resources available are also being targeted at those in receipt of fuel allowance. **"In the budget we provided for an 11% increase in the value of the Fuel Allowance bringing it to €20 per week and this too will be payable from next week. The Fuel Allowance scheme has also been extended by another two weeks from April 2009, bringing it to 32 weeks in total."**

This coming year will see over €260 million extra in targeted support for people of working age, claiming Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance - which increase by €6.50 per week to €204.30 per week from January 2009 with proportionate increases for those people on reduced rates. **"This is the first time that the lowest social welfare payments will be above €200 per week. Over 733,000 people are in receipt of working age payments including Jobseeker's, One Parent Families, those claiming Illness Benefit and Disability Allowance as well as Carers and they will all benefit from these increases."**

There are also targeted increases for families in receipt of a social welfare payment or low income earners with children. People getting a social welfare payment that have dependent children currently get an extra €24 per week for each child on top of their basic social welfare payment. From next week this rate is being increased by €2 to €26.

The payment for people in work on low earnings, Family Income Supplement available from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, will see the earnings threshold increase by €10 per child, which will mean an average extra payment of €6 per child per week. Minister Hanafin added, **"it is estimated that a total of 29,000 families will benefit from Family Income Supplement in 2009 and that approximately 2,000 additional families will become eligible for a**



payment, so we would encourage people who think they may be eligible as a result of these new increased threshold to make an application.”

The increases in the rates of payments for recipients of Jobseeker’s Benefit and Allowance, Farm Assist, Illness/Maternity Benefit, One Parent Family Payment, Family Income Supplement, Carer’s Benefit and Supplementary Allowance and for those customers paid by electronic methods will be paid in full from January.

As in previous years those customers who are paid through a book method - such as recipients of certain long-term payments such as Widows/Widowers, Carer’s Allowance and Invalidity Pension - will receive their increase in mid-February backdated to January.

In some cases (such as Disability Allowance and the State Pension) a special once-off payment in mid February to cover 12 weeks payment to end-March will also be paid to customers whose books are due for renewal at the beginning of April.

The increases, which will cost €515 million in 2009, apply to full rate payments, with proportionate increase for people on reduced rates. Minister Hanafin concluded by saying, **“spending on social welfare schemes is estimated at over €19.5 billion in 2009. This means that one third of day to day expenditure in 2009 by the Government will be on social welfare schemes.”**

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